



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

April 2006
EPA530-F-06-010
www.epa.gov/osw

Recycle on the Go: Recycling Places in Public Spaces

Americans realize that recycling is a good thing. We know recycling saves energy and natural resources. Statistics show us that we seem to forget about recycling when we entertain ourselves—whether we're sight-seers at the National Cherry Blossom Festival, fans at sports events, audiences in theaters, or families at neighborhood picnics. We are not recycling because we don't have any place other than trash bins for our bottles, cans, and other materials that we normally recycle. It's time to put recycling places in public spaces.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is conducting a national campaign to do just that—to make recycling easy and convenient when we're doing the things we love to do. But, it's going to take more than just changing the name on the bin. It's going to take hard work and resources. At the national level, we must provide incentives and conduct educational campaigns to institutionalize recycling in public spaces. State and local communities must devote the same resources to public-space recycling as they currently devote to residential recycling. We must adopt a "recycling-on-the-go" ethic, so that we practice recycling wherever we are. We need to work together to make sure that recycling systems in public spaces are affordable and seamlessly integrated into local collection systems. These recycling places also should accommodate any material that people on the go need and want to recycle. And finally, we must make sure individual recycling stations are well maintained, clean, and safe.

Taking and Tossing

Americans take and toss about one-third of all single beverage containers away from home. Nearly 90 percent of the plastic water bottles we use get tossed out or become litter.

Can You Believe This?

Between 1990-2000, Americans wasted more than 7 million tons of aluminum cans. That's enough aluminum to manufacture 316,000 Boeing 737 airplanes or to reproduce the world's entire commercial air fleet 25 times.

Public spaces add significantly to the livability of a place. They include parks, indoor and outdoor recreation centers, and highly visible commercial areas. They can be uptown, downtown, out-of-

town, or simply our own unique neighborhood. Whatever and wherever they are, they invite us to live, work, and play there. For these reasons, recycling places in our public spaces should reflect or otherwise incorporate the particular character of the public spaces they occupy—whatever they may be.

EPA made its first effort at putting recycling places in public spaces when we partnered with the National Football League (NFL) and others to collect recyclable containers at the 2006 NFL Pro Bowl in Hawaii. More than 8,000 bottles and cans were collected. Big things start small. Other NFL teams and municipalities are interested in holding similar events to boost recycling in their public spaces. Small things get bigger.

EPA and the National Park Service have enjoyed a long and mutually beneficial partnership using established waste management techniques to help sustain our nation's parks. We teamed up with them at the 2006 National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C. to collect beverage containers and cardboard for recycling. We hope our collaboration evolves into permanent practice for all future events at the National Mall area. We collected about 20,000 plastic and aluminum containers.

Remember, recycling saves energy, conserves resources, reduces the need for new landfills and incinerators, and stimulates the development of green technologies. Putting recycling places in public spaces is another way EPA is working to achieve our 35 percent national recycling rate. We are not only looking for ways to accomplish this goal, we're looking for people and organizations to work with us on it. So, the next time you're in a public space, look for the recycling place, and recycle. If you can't find a recycling place, ask the responsible authority to look into installing one—after all, it's public space.

For more information about Recycling Places in Public Spaces, please see:

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conservation/priorities/msw.htm>

For more information on the National Cherry Blossom Festival, please see:

<http://www.nps.gov/nacc/cherry/>

For more information about the Resource Conservation Challenge, please see:

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conservation/index.htm>

For more information about recycling, please see:

<http://www.epa.gov/msw/facts.htm>

For more information about the National Park Service, please see:

<http://www.nps.gov>

For more information on National Park Service environmental activities, please see:

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/protectingrestoring/>